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WAGNER AND THE PARIS OPÉRA:

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS (FEBRUARY—MARCH, 1861)

By J. G. PROD'HOMME

It would seem that everything had been told and retold as to the historic days of *Tannhäuser* in Paris, the events preparatory and the consequences. Writers on music, both French and foreign, have recounted to the last detail this memorable episode in the life of Wagner and the annals of the Opéra—searching the contemporary periodicals, interviewing the survivors, devoting themselves, in a word, to any inquiry which might result in setting forth the event in its true light. Nutter himself, Wagner's collaborator, narrated some thirty years ago the history of the 164 rehearsals of *Tannhäuser* and of its three unique performances. But it appears that, wittingly or unwittingly, he omitted the principal documents—the letters of Wagner himself—in the little administrative dossier whose existence was revealed to me through the great kindness of M. A. Banès, Nutter's successor in the administration of the Library and the Archives of the Opéra.

These documents, more than half a century old, include first of all the manuscript of the French libretto, which was submitted to the censor and viséd perfunctorily by Camille Doucet, in these terms: "Read and authorized by the Minister of State for the Imperial Theatre of the Odéon (*sic*), Paris, February 25th, 1861"; and was then transmitted to the Opéra by the commissary of police of the Faubourg Montmartre, in whose precinct the theatre of the rue Lepeletier was situated.

Letters of scene painters, stage managers, etc., accompany this libretto, as also the usual train of solicitations to assist at the rehearsals or at the first performances, signed with names both illustrious and obscure. And finally, arranged in the order of their dates for February and March, a half-dozen letters of Wagner himself—all written in French—the text of which is given below. Some of these pages, which were known only in part, or the existence of which was merely suspected, were evidently conceived and written by the composer; but others—and notably that of the 7th of March to the minister Walewski—were dictated to him by his collaborator Nutter, among whose papers the rough draughts were found.

One of the last rehearsals, which was to be "general," like thirteen others which followed during the next three weeks, took place on Sunday, the 24th of February, in the presence of the Minister of State, Count Walewski, the Superintendent of the imperial theatres, Bacciocchi, and of a number of persons invited by the management of the Opéra, or by Wagner himself. The next day, Monday, Wagner, thoroughly dissatisfied with the director of the orchestra, Dietsch¹, addressed himself to Royer in the following terms:

Paris 25 Février 1861.

Mon cher Monsieur Royer,

je ne puis décidément consentir à ce quel'effet du zèle inouï de tant d'artistes et de chefs d'étude soit abandonné à la merci d'un chef d'orchestre incapable, en ce qui concerne mon ouvrage, de diriger l'exécution définitive.

Sans revenir sur les griefs que j'aurais à faire valoir contre le directeur de l'orchestre le quel a méconnu le caractère amical de la proposition que je lui ai faite à l'effet d'obtenir qu'il me laissât conduire moi-même une répétition; sans appuier non plus sur le résultat que j'attendais de cette répétition qui m'eût permis de lui indiquer, de lui montrer en quelque sorte toutes les nuances essentielles qu'il n'a pu saisir lui-même, je me vois obligé par le fait de cette résistance, d'augmenter la somme de mes prétentions et de vous soumettre la résolution irrévocable que j'ai prise à la suite de la répétition d'hier.

Je demande donc aujourd'hui non seulement à conduire une répétition, qui sera la dernière, mais de plus à diriger les trois premières représentations de mon ouvrage, dont je crois l'exécution impossible si vous ne trouvez les moyens de satisfaire mes légitimes exigences.

Je n'ai pas à examiner les difficultés qui peuvent s'opposer à l'application

Paris, February 25th, 1861.

My dear Monsieur Royer,

Decidedly I cannot consent that the result of the unheard-of zeal of so many artists and *chefs d'étude* should be abandoned to the mercy of a conductor incapable of directing the definitive performance of my work.

Not to recur to the grievances, of which I might, if I chose, avail myself, against the director of the orchestra, who has failed to recognize the amicable nature of the proposition that I made him, that he should permit me to conduct one of the rehearsals myself; not to dwell upon the results that I expected from this rehearsal, which would have permitted me to indicate to him, to show him in some way all the essential *nuances* which he has not been able to grasp by himself, I find myself obliged by the fact of this resistance to increase my claims and to submit to you my irrevocable resolution, taken at the close of yesterday's rehearsal.

I ask then today, not only to conduct a rehearsal which shall be the last, but in addition, to direct the first three performances of my work, the production of which I believe to be impossible unless you find the means to satisfy my legitimate demands.

It is not my part to consider the difficulties which may oppose them-

¹Pierre Louis Philippe Dietsch (born at Dijon, March 17, 1808; died at Paris in Feb., 1865) then conductor of the orchestra of the Opéra, where he had been at first director of the chorus. Dietsch was the composer of the *Vaisseau fantôme*, (Nov. 9, 1842, in two acts. Libretto by Paul Foucher, after the poem sold by Wagner to the Opéra, for 500 francs, in 1841).

de cette mesure, mais uniquement à vous en faire comprendre le caractère de nécessité absolue.

Quoiqu'il puisse advenir, le fait même de la représentation de mon *Tannhäuser* à l'opéra ne saurait plus désormais en être séparé. C'est vous dire aussi, mon cher Monsieur Royer, qu'il y a urgence pour vous de prendre à votre tour un parti et de faire un dernier effort en faveur d'une tâche dans l'accomplissement de laquelle vous m'avez jusqu'ici secondé avec tant de bonne volonté.

Vous comprendrez qu'en l'état de choses la solution doit être prompte. La prolongation des répétitions, en admettant quelque heureux résultat pour le chef d'orchestre, est impossible; les artistes sont accablés; et moi-même je ne me sens plus le courage d'entreprendre l'éducation du chef autrement qu'en l'invitant à être témoin de la dernière répétition et des trois premières représentations conduites par moi-même.

Agréez, mon cher Monsieur Royer, l'expression de mes sentiments affectueux (*sic*) avec lesquels j'ai l'honneur d'être

Votre
très dévoué serviteur
RICHARD WAGNER.¹

selves to this measure, but solely to make you comprehend the absolute necessity of it.

Whatever may happen, the very fact of the representation of my *Tannhäuser* at the opéra is involved. Which is to say to you, my dear Monsieur, that there is urgent need that you, in your turn, should take part and make a last effort in favor of a task in the accomplishment of which you have hitherto seconded me with so much good-will.

You understand that in the present state of affairs the solution must be prompt. The prolonging of rehearsals, while it would permit a happier result for the conductor, is impossible; the artists are discouraged; and I myself no longer feel that I have the courage to undertake the instruction of the conductor, otherwise than by inviting him to be present at the last rehearsal and the first three performances, conducted by myself.

Accept, my dear Monsieur Royer, the expression of my affectionate regard, with which I have the honor to be

Your devoted servant
RICHARD WAGNER.¹

Wagner obtained, naturally, no satisfaction, and one "general" rehearsal followed after the other. There were two of these, one the 28th of February and the other the 2d of March, which were to be the last: 504 persons assisted, and the artists of the three illustrated papers which were published in Paris at that time had been invited. The letters and notes which follow, written the evening before or on the morning of the very day of this rehearsal, show that Wagner was not as disinterested in this matter as he had said on February 25th:

Paris, ce 1 mars 1861.

Monsieur le Directeur,
c'est probablement par un malentendu qu'on n'a pas encore fait droit à ma demande de 100 (cent) entrées pour la répétition générale de demain.

Paris, March 1st, 1861.

Monsieur the Director,
it is probably by some misunderstanding that no response has been made to my request for 100 (one hundred) tickets for the rehearsal to-

¹Cf. Altmann, R. Wagner's Briefe, no. 1459.

Jusqu'ici, si la salle a été trop encombrée aux dernières répétitions, ce n'est point de ma faute. Pour celle d'hier par exemple, j'ai même refusé à ma femme la faveur de m'y accompagner, pour que la répétition eût le caractère le plus intime. J'ai été fort étonné alors de voir la salle remplie(s) d'individus qui m'étaient parfaitement inconnus. Je crois être dans mon droit, en vous demandant, Monsieur, de m'envoyer au plus tôt—préalablement—cent parterre pour placer mes amis, que j'ai discrètement renvoyés à cette répétition générale. En outre je vous prie, Monsieur, de satisfaire aux demandes des artistes étrangers pour loges et stalles à cette même répétition de demain soir.

Agréez mes civilités empressées.

RICHARD WAGNER.¹

morrow. If up to this time the room has been too full at the rehearsals, this was not my fault. For that of yesterday, for example, I refused even my wife the privilege of accompanying me, in order that the rehearsal might be of the most private character. I was greatly astonished, then, to see the room filled with individuals entirely unknown to me. I believe that I am entirely within my right in asking you, Monsieur, to send me as soon as possible—first—one hundred parterre tickets for the friends whom I have discreetly sent to this rehearsal. And in addition, I beg you, Monsieur, to satisfy the demands of foreign artists for boxes and stalls at this same rehearsal of tomorrow evening.

Accept my compliments.

RICHARD WAGNER.¹

The composer received immediate satisfaction, and it is probably the receipt for the enclosure which was brought that very evening to his house which appears in the dossier, with his signature. Here is the text:

THÉÂTRE IMPÉRIAL DE L'OPÉRA

Le 1^{er} mars 1861.

Envoyé une lettre à M. R. Wagner
Rue d'Aumale 3

Partie à 10 heures du soir

Reçue à 10 heures 35 du soir.

Richard Wagner.

IMPERIAL THEATRE OF THE OPÉRA

March 1st, 1861.

A letter sent to M. R. Wagner

Rue d'Aumale 3.

Sent at 10 o'clock in the evening.

Received at 10.35 o'clock in the evening.

Richard Wagner.

These hundred seats, however, were not sufficient for Wagner, who wrote on the following day the two letters that follow, addressed, the first probably to Royer, the second to the general secretary M. Martin, who had the task of distributing the precious tickets, the right to which was so disputed, not only by the artists, but by all Paris, which thought it had the right to assist.

Mon cher Monsieur,

comme j'ai tout le monde renvoyé pour la dernière répétition générale, je me trouve dans l'embarras de ne pas avoir

My dear Monsieur,

having sent all the world to the last general rehearsal, I find myself in the embarrassing position of not having

¹This letter was reproduced in facsimile by M. Ad. Jullien, in his great work on Wagner.

assez même avec les cent billets, que vous étiez assez bon de m'envoyer hier soir. Il m'arrivent toujours encore des demandes, de la part de nos artistes, des ambassades; des amis oubliés—etc—de la sorte à n'y pouvoir suffir, si vous ne me donnez pas encore *Cinquante cartes*.

Je me dis cette fois, que, si même je voulais me restreindre à un nombre aussi grand, je trouverais toujours la salle pleine, et j'aurais alors seulement des reproches de tous ceux, que j'aurais eu renvoyés.—

Permettez moi ainsi de persister dans ma prière, et agréez les compliments empressés de

Votre
très dévoué serviteur

RICH. WAGNER.

Paris

2 mars 1861.

Monsieur Martin est prié d'agréer mes remerciements les plus empressés pour la bonté avec laquelle il a voulu répondre à ma demande.

Voudrait il bien me remettre quatre loges pour que les puisse (*sic*) mettre à la disposition des membres de plusieurs ambassades, qui s'intéressent spécialement à mon ouvrage.

Avec la considération la plus distinguée son

très dévoué serviteur

RICH. WAGNER.

2 mars 1861.

enough even with the one hundred tickets which you were good enough to send me yesterday evening. Further requests come to me constantly, from our artists, from the embassies; from friends who have been forgotten—etc. —in such number that I shall not have enough unless you give me *Fifty cards* more.

I say to myself this time, that, even if I should restrict myself to that number, I should still find the room full, and would then have only the reproaches of all those whom I would otherwise have sent.—

Permit me then to persist in my request, and accept the compliments of

Your
devoted servant

RICH. WAGNER.

Paris,

March 2d, 1861.

I beg that Monsieur Martin will accept my most sincere thanks for the kindness with which he responded to my request.

Will he send me four boxes to put at the disposal of the members of several of the embassies, who are especially interested in my work.

With most distinguished regard his

devoted servant

RICH. WAGNER.

March 2d, 1861.

This little note, without date, is very probably of the same day:

Mon cher Monsieur

voudriez-vous avoir la bonté de m'envoyer encore *une douzaine* de cartes d'entrée pour ce soir. Je crois bien que j'ai oublié quelques amis tout intimes.

Recevez mes remerciements les plus empressés

Votre
très dévoué

RICHARD WAGNER.

My dear Monsieur

will you have the kindness to send me *a dozen* tickets more for this evening. I believe that I have forgotten several very intimate friends.

Accept my most sincere thanks,

Your
devoted

RICHARD WAGNER.

Another letter, which follows, dated the 4th of February—perhaps by inadvertence—should apparently be put a month later and thus brought nearer to the preceding. For, at the beginning of February, although *Tannhäuser* had been talked of for months, the date of first performance does not seem to have been settled, since the general rehearsal, announced at first for Sunday, the 24th of February, had been constantly put off. It is very probable that Wagner by distraction antedated, as one often does at the beginning of a month, this letter, whose contents, however, are equally interesting whatever the date. It relates to Giacomelli, then editor of the *Gazette des Théâtres*, and one of the earliest partisans of Wagnerism in France.

Paris 4 Février 61.

Mon cher Monsieur

on s'adresse de toutes parts à moi pour avoir des places pour les premières représentations du *Tannhäuser*. Comme ces demandes m'arrivent par des amis de toutes (*sic*) pays, et dont la plupart (*sic*) fait pour cela des grands voyages de l'Allemagne, de la Suisse, etc, je me sens fortement obligé de leurs assurer des places; au lieu de laisser toutes celles-ci dans les mains de spéculateurs, qui les vendent peut-être à mes pires ennemis. Mais, avec mes autres occupations de cette période si accablante pour moi, il m'est impossible, de m'occuper spécialement avec les arrangements dans le placement de mes amis.

Je prends donc le parti de confier à Mr. Giacomelli, qui m'a déjà assisté (*sic*) autre fois à mon entier contentement, et qui vous remettra cette lettre la direction absolue de toutes ces affaires. Vous voudrez donc bien le reconnaître comme mon fondé de pouvoir, soit pour retirer du bureau en mon nom mes billets d'auteur, des six premières représentations, soit pour user de mon privilège pour prendre à l'avance à la location toutes les places, loges ou stalles, dont je pourrais avoir besoin.—

Je profite de cette occasion pour vous remercier de grand cœur pour tout l'intérêt que vous prenez à l'ave-

Paris, February 4th 61.

My dear Monsieur,

I am addressed from all sides by persons desiring places for the first performances of *Tannhäuser*. As these requests come to me from friends in all countries, the majority of whom make for this purpose long journeys from Germany, Switzerland, etc., I feel myself obliged to assure them of places; instead of leaving all these in the hands of speculators who will sell them perhaps to my worst enemies. But, with the other occupations of this period, so overwhelming for me, it is impossible to occupy myself especially with the arrangements for the placing of my friends.

Thus I take the course of confiding to M. Giacomelli, who has assisted me in former times to my entire satisfaction and who will deliver to you this letter, the absolute direction of all these matters. You will kindly recognize him as my agent, empowered to receive from the bureau in my name the complimentary author's tickets for the first six performances and to make use of my privilege of taking in advance of the general sale all the seats, boxes or stalls of which I might have need.

I avail myself of this occasion to thank you with all my heart for the interest which you have taken in the

ment de mon ouvrage, et vous assurer la plus grande reconnaissance pour tous vos soins amicaux par lesquels vous allez si fortement m'obliger.

Avec la plus grande considération je suis

Votre
très-dévoué

RICHARD WAGNER.

3 rue d'Aumale.

advancement of my work, and to assure you of my great appreciation of all the friendly services by which you have put me under such great obligation.

With greatest esteem, I am

Your

very-devoted

RICHARD WAGNER.

3 rue d'Aumale.

In the meantime, with the tenacity which characterized him, Wagner, being determined to obtain what he had asked in vain of Royer, resolved to address himself to the minister, Count Walewski, himself. He requested a number of his friends to meet at his house, probably on Monday the 4th of March; among them was Royer, who received the following note:

Mon cher ami,

Vous êtes chaudement prié d'assister demain, *lundi*, à *Midi et demie* (*sic*) précise, à une petite conférence des amis que j'ai convoqué (*sic*) pour discuter froidement des mesures nécessaires à prendre de ma part.

Je compte sur vous et votre conseil amical.

Tout à vous

RICHARD WAGNER.

Dimanche soir.

My dear friend,

You are cordially invited to assist tomorrow, *Monday at half past twelve* precisely, at a little conference of friends whom I have summoned in order to discuss in cold blood the measures that it will be necessary for me to take.

I count upon your friendly counsel.

Yours

RICHARD WAGNER.

Sunday evening.

The conference, of which Wagner speaks in "My Life," took place on the day appointed: one notes among those present, Count Hatzfeld, the ambassador, Emile Erlanger, Otto Wesendonck, who was *de passage* in Paris, the Englishman Praeger, Royer (perhaps?), Kietz, the painter-designer, friend of the years of misery in Paris. "The result of this conference," says Wagner, "was that I was to address myself to the Emperor Napoleon, who responded with his usual kindness, that I might have further rehearsals." Nutter, the faithful collaborator of Wagner, presumably served as secretary at this conference, at the close of which he wrote out for his friend the letter to Count Walewski of which the rough draught is preserved in the Archives of the Opéra. Nothing could better depict Wagner's state of mind at this time.

We know by Count Walewski's reply that this request should be dated the 7th of March.

[7 mars 1861.]

M. le Comte

Un ordre de Sa Majesté a (ouvert)¹ fait admettre le Tannhäuser sur la scène de l'Opéra. (Je n'ai pas besoin d'insister auprès de V. E. J'en conserve au fond du cœur la plus vive gratitude que puisse). Je n'ai pas besoin d'insister auprès de Votre Ex. sur la profonde gratitude que j'en conserverai éternellement. Mais je dois dire combien j'ai été touché du zèle et du talent avec lequel l'administration les chefs de service, les artistes m'ont sans cesse secondé. J'ai été persuadé jusqu'au dernier moment que la représentation serait complètement digne de la haute faveur (que) dont j'avais été honoré par sa M. [Majesté]. Maintenant il reste un seul point sur lequel je crois devoir appeler l'attention de V. E. C'est la direction de l'orchestre.

Quand M. Royer me (parla) demanda la première fois (de la possi) si je consentirais à conduire (pendant) quelques représentations je refusai cet honneur. Il (Je ne pouvais) semblait plus naturel, dans l'intérêt même de mon ouvrage, (de donner un) d'initier un chef d'orchestre à toutes mes intentions et d'assurer par là une bonne exécution, sans et dehors de ma présence.

Dans ce but je n'ai rien négligé, je n'ai omis aucune explication et malgré cela je suis arrivé à me convaincre et j'offre de prouver devant une commission d'artistes, que le chef d'orchestre qui doit conduire mon ouvrage n'a pas encore l'expérience nécessaire pour cette tâche difficile (qu'on ne saurait apprendre en quelques mois). Depuis que (j'ai cessé) je lui ai retiré mon assistance immédiate et

[March 7th, 1861.]

M. le Comte

An order of His Majesty has (opened)¹ admitted Tannhäuser to the stage of the Opéra. (I need not be insistent with y[our] E[xcellency] I cherish in the depths of my heart the most lively gratitude possible) I need not with Your Excellency dwell upon the profound gratitude which I shall cherish eternally. But I feel that I ought to say how much I have been touched by the zeal and the ability with which the administration, the chiefs of the service, the artists, have seconded me, without ceasing. I was persuaded until the last moment that the performance would be entirely worthy of the distinguished favor (which) with which I had been honored by his M.[Majesty]. But there remains a single point to which I believe that I ought to call the attention of y[our] E[xcellency] This is the direction of the orchestra.

When M. Royer (spoke to) asked me the first time (as to the possi) if I would consent to conduct (during) some of the performances I refused the honor. It (I could not) seemed more natural, to the interest indeed of my work, (to give a) to initiate an orchestral conductor into all my plans and thus to insure a good rendering, without or aside from my presence.

To this end I have neglected nothing, I have omitted no explanation, and in spite of that I have become convinced and I offer to prove before a commission of artists that the orchestral director who is to conduct my work has not as yet the experience necessary for this difficult task (which one could not acquire in a few months). Since (I

¹The words in parentheses have been struck out entirely by Nutter and replaced by the definitive text that follows them. The words which are illegible are indicated by (?).

que j'ai quitté la scène pour me placer dans la salle j'ai pu constater a chaque instant l'incapacité, le manque de mémoire, l'impuissance à maintenir les mouvements indiqués. Mes chanteurs sont abandonnés, ils ne se sentent pas soutenus. Dans ces conditions l'effet de la représentation sera médiocre et très loin de répondre aux moyens employés. C'est là un danger immense pour un ouvrage qui ne fait aucune concession au goût ordinaire et qui ne peut être imposé que par une exécution parfaite et telle que je puisse l'obtenir si j'étais à la tête (de l') d'un orchestre aussi justement renommé.

(Cette faveur que j'avais refusée) Cette faveur est considérée partout comme un droit du compositeur. (Loin de croire) je l'avais refusée quand on me l'offrait j'étais donc bien loin de croire qu'elle put m'être contestée au dernier moment quand les (leurent rendue) faits la rendaient nécessaire. Aussi je me (?) à l'idée d'en faire l'objet d'un (?) quelconque

Maintenant (cependant) pourtant je me trouve (dans l'impossibilité d') impuissant à obtenir cette (faveur) concession de M. Dietsch.

Je suis le premier à reconnaître la grande difficulté que présente pour votre excellence la solution de cette affaire. Si (j'étais dans) je me trouvais dans la situation ordinaire d'un auteur vis à vis d'un Théâtre je retirerais mon ouvrage. Mais (?) senti (?) (il ne m'est pas) m'est tout à fait impossible de répondre par un tel procédé à la haute faveur dont j'ai été l'objet.

(CETTE) Et cependant je me trouve amené ainsi à la veille d'une représentation dont l'issue me paraît douteuse. Je crois donc que le seul parti qui me reste (à prendre désormais) est de m'abstenir désormais de prendre aucune part à une affaire dont la conduite n'est plus dans mes mains. (En me retirant j'ai cru devoir protester devant votre Exc. contre l'exécution qui va) Et puisqu'il s'agit en somme d'un

have ceased) I have withdrawn from him my immediate assistance and have left the stage to place myself in the hall I have been able at every moment to establish the fact of his incapacity, his lack of memory, his lack of power to maintain the tempos indicated. My singers are abandoned, they do not feel themselves supported. Under these conditions the effect of the performance will be mediocre and very far from corresponding to the means employed. There is in all this great danger for a work which makes no concessions to the ordinary taste, and which cannot be forced upon the public except by a perfect rendering such as I could obtain if I were at the head (of the) of an orchestra so justly renowned.

(This favor which I had refused). This favor is everywhere considered as a right of the composer. (Far from thinking) I refused it when it was offered to me, little thinking that it could be denied me at the last moment when the facts should render it necessary. Thus I (?) the idea of making it the object of a (?) whatever

Now (nevertheless) however I find myself (in the impossibility of) powerless to obtain this (favor) concession from M. Dietsch.

I am the first to recognize the great difficulty which the solution of this matter presents for your excellency. If (I were in) I found myself in the ordinary relation of an author to a Theatre I would withdraw my work. But (?) felt (?) (it is not) it is quite impossible for me to respond by such a proceeding to the distinguished favor of which I have been the object.

(This) And meanwhile I find myself on the eve of a performance whose issue seems to me doubtful. I believe that the only course that remains for me (to take henceforth) is to abstain henceforth from taking any part in an affair the conduct of which is no longer in my hands. (In withdrawing I have thought that I should protest to your

ouvrage qui est le mien en me retirant j'ai cru devoir protester devant vot. Exc. (contre son execution qu'il va recevoir) et me reserver le droit de protester du moins vis-a-vis du public.

Exc[ellency] against the performance which is going) And since, after all, it is a question of a work which is my own, in withdrawing I have thought that I ought to protest to your Exc[ellency] (against the rendering which it is about to receive) and reserve to myself the right to protest, at least before the public.

Count Walewski responded the following day, March 8th, that he was "happy to have to confirm the eulogies" which Wagner had written of the singers and the orchestra, but at the same time refused the favor asked, as Royer had done. "Never in France, whether in the case of the works of our own composers or of those of foreign masters, such as Rossini and Meyerbeer," adds the minister with perhaps some irony, "has the director of the orchestra been deprived of his right to remain at the head of his phalanx of performers. Moreover: according to our ideas and our French customs, the director who should yield to another his place during these important and decisive days would be considered as deserting his duty and would lose for the future all the prestige of his authority."¹

Wagner considered the matter at an end and ceased from that time to interest himself in the fate of his work, which was produced, as we know, on Wednesday, the 13th of March.

It was probably at this time that he addressed to Royer, director of the Opéra, the letter (undated, unsigned and incomplete) of which we give the hitherto unpublished text:

Monsieur le Directeur,

Vous me demandez de nouvelles coupures dans mon *Tannhäuser* pour réduire la durée de mon ouvrage au temps nécessaire qui puisse vous permettre de faire suivre la représentation de mon opéra par un divertissement de danse, et c'est au moyen de ce sacrifice que vous croyez arriver à contenter une partie puissante de vos abonnés,

Monsieur the Director,

You ask me to make further cuts in my *Tannhäuser* in order to reduce the duration of the work sufficiently to enable you to follow the performance of my opera with a ballet, and it is by means of this sacrifice that you hope to satisfy an influential part of your subscribers, who (now oppose the success of my work)² regarding themselves

¹The question of *Composers as conductors* set forth and defended vigorously by Gounod after his return from England (in the *Ménestrel* of the 9th of June, 1873) provoked at the time a lively polemic. Two years later, the 30th of May, 1875, at a gala concert given at the new Opéra, Gounod found himself refused the direction, which caused some difficulty. But he did not consider himself beaten, being quite determined to conquer the "routine" and the "prejudices." The Opéra-Comique offered him, on the 3d of May, 1877, the direction of his *Cinq-Mars*, and the Opéra did the same finally, the first of April, 1881, on the occasion of the production of his *Tribut de Zamora*, twenty years after the Wagner incident.

²The words in parenthesis are canceled in the original.

qui s'oppose maintenant au succès de mon ouvrage) se trouvant trompés par l'absence d'un ballet régulier au milieu de la représentation s'oppose au succès de mon ouvrage.

S'il s'agissait pour moi du début d'un tout nouvel ouvrage, je crois avoir préféré de retirer une partition toute entière pour la préserver d'une mutilation principielle, en me rappelant les mots de Schiller: "Si l'art a été abaissé, (c'était touj) ce n'était que par les artistes eux-mêmes!" Mais il me semble cette fois de n'être dans le cas de m'identifier moi-même, mes idées et mes tendances, avec cet (te) ouvrage du Tannhäuser, qui, depuis qu'il est connu par toute l'Europe musicienne, appartient plus au monde qu'à moi-même, et pour l'appréciation (de la) duquel le sort qui lui est réservé, (par l'observance) en conformation aux usages du grand Opéra de Paris, ne peut (rien plu) plus changé en rien d'essentiel. Ainsi, depuis bien (des) d'années j'étais comme mort pour cet ouvrage, qui a été donné partout sans mon assistance, de la sorte à me faire perdre presque tout sentiment d'une cohérence vivante entre moi et mon oeuvre. C'était donc une sorte de hasard qui m'a (fait rencontrer) mis encore une fois dans un (rapp) contact (rapport) immédiat(e) et acti(ve)f avec cet ouvrage par (son) sa transplantation sur le premier théâtre de Paris cette honneur qu'il devait à sa renommée (gagn) acquise d'ailleurs.

J'ai profité des excellentes dispositions que j'ai trouvées à cet égard, pour contribuer de ma part si bien que possible à la réussite de l'opération, et j'ai joui de la grande satisfaction de voir mon oeuvre parfaitement bien rendu par les artistes, et chaudement accueilli par le public, qui, malgré des efforts d'une opposition (bien articulé) acharnée, a couvert bien de fois ma musique de (applaudissements) unanimes. Complètement satisfait par ses expériences (*sic*) incontestables, je crois

as defrauded by the absence of a regular ballet in the middle of the performance, oppose themselves to the success of my work.

If it had been for me a question of the début of an entirely new work, I believe that I should have preferred to withdraw the whole score to preserve it from serious mutilation, recalling to myself the words of Schiller: "If art has been degraded, (it was alw) it was but by the artists themselves." But it seems to me this time not to be an occasion for identifying myself, my ideas and my tendencies with this work Tannhäuser, which, since it has become known to all of musical Europe, belongs more to the world than to myself, and the appreciation (of it) which fate has reserved for it, can (nothing more) no longer be influenced materially (by the observance) by altering the work so that it shall conform to the usages of the grand Opéra of Paris. Indeed, for several years I have been as if dead to this opera, which has been given everywhere without my assistance, in such a manner as to make me lose all feeling of a living connection between me and my work. It was then, in a way, chance which brought me once more into immediate and active (relat) contact (relation) with this work by its transplantation to the first theatre of Paris, an honor which it owes to the renown (gain) acquired elsewhere.

I have profited by the excellent arrangements that I have found in regard to this matter, to contribute on my part as much as possible to the success of the undertaking, and I have enjoyed great satisfaction in seeing my work perfectly rendered by artists, and warmly received by the public, which, despite the efforts of a bitter opposition (clearly expressed), has many times covered my music with unanimous (applause). Completely satisfied by these incontestable experiences, I believe that I may now

(me) pouvoir me retirer maintenant, de la surveillance du sort futur de mon ouvrage, et laisser le soin de (conf) le conformer aux usages dominantes de votre théâtre, à ceux, qui jusque-là sont si bien entrés dans mes vues personnelles quant à l'esprit de l'exécution. Comme il s'agit de conserver un ouvrage pour satisfaire (tous ceux) les desirs de ceux, (qui ont si chaudement accuei auxquels il a pu faire du plaisir) qui en ont pris un intérêt bien ouvertement prononcé, je vous autorise de faire tout ce qui vous semblera utile pour contenter ceux qui n'ont pu trouver tout ce qui leur fait plaisir d'ordinaire. Pour cela vous me regarderez comme si j'étais mort et hors d'état de m'occuper moi-même des (mon oeuvre) exécution de mon oeuvre, ainsi comme je suis (mort), dans le même sens, mort pour ce Tannhäuser en tout ce qui concerne ces représentations sur d'autres théâtres.

withdraw from the superintendence of the future fate of my work, and leave the care of (conf) making it conform to the prevailing usages of your theatre, to those who up to this time have entered so thoroughly into my personal views as to the spirit of the rendition. As it is a question of preserving a work to satisfy (all those) the desire of those (who have so warmly receiv to whom it has been able to give pleasure) who have taken a quite openly pronounced interest in it, I authorize you to do all that seems to you of use in contenting those who have not been able to find in it all that gives them pleasure ordinarily. For this you may regard me as if I were dead and so unable to occupy myself with (my work) the production of my work, as I am (dead), in the same sense, dead to this Tannhäuser in all that relates to these performances in other theatres.

The two pages of this letter, or rather of this incomplete draught, stop, unfortunately, with these words. It is probable that Royer had knowledge of it so far as it goes. A little note, already known in substance, dating without doubt from the 25th of March, and not signed, confirms the contents of it in these terms:

Puisque des membres du Jockey Clubb (*sic*) ne veulent pas permettre que le public de Paris puisse entendre mon opéra exécuté sur la scène de l'Académie Impériale de musique faute de ne voir dansé (*sic*) un ballet à l'heure ordinaire de leur entrée au théâtre, je retire ma partition et je vous prie de vouloir bien communiquer à Son Excellence le Ministre d'Etat ma résolution par laquelle je crois le tirer d'un anbaras (*sic*) important.

Since the members of the Jockey Clubb (*sic*) do not wish to permit the public of Paris to hear my work performed on the stage of the Imperial Academy of music because of not seeing a ballet at the usual hour of their entrance into the theatre, I withdraw my score and I beg you to consent to communicate to His Excellency the Minister of State my resolution, by which I believe that I relieve him of a serious embarrassment.

A letter more official in style, with the same address, confirms this note, and the 9th of April following, Wagner reconsidering his intention of being regarded "as if he were dead," protested once more against the announced fourth performance of *Tann-*

häuser, which had been demanded by the Friday subscribers. His letter and the reply given by Count Walewski, on the 14th, are well known.¹ The minister having examined "very seriously the question raised by MM. the subscribers for Friday," it appears to him finally "that this fourth performance presents more inconveniences than advantages" and he definitely abandons the thought of it.

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* *

The incidents that attended the three unique performances of *Tannhäuser* in the theatre of the rue Lepeletier are well known and have been narrated with the greatest luxury of detail by the erudite Georges Servières. But that which the administrative dossier of the Archives of the Opéra reveals to us is the curiosity of the public and of the artists, which expressed itself in a multitude of letters or of notes of solicitants desirous of assisting at this great *première* or even at the rehearsals, of which all Paris was talking.

One of the most curious of these is the following, signed by Emile Ollivier, Liszt's son-in-law, whose wife Blandine was the sister of Cosima who in 1870 became Mme. Richard Wagner. The future minister of the "Liberal empire," Emile Ollivier, who died last year, was then only a lawyer, although a very renowned one, at the bar of Paris. In this capacity he had occasion to defend Wagner in the different lawsuits caused by *Tannhäuser*, and above all in the disputes between the different translators and librettists.

A recent work and a most curious, *Richard Wagner und die Frauen*, by Julius Kapp, shows us that, through the recommendation of his friend Liszt, Wagner had already formed close relations with Blandine and her husband during his sojourn in Paris, in January, 1858: "... The friendship of Wagner with the young couple had become very close when Wagner was installed in Paris; and the attachment of the master for Blandine in particular had taken such a form as to arouse the jealousy of Minna Wagner. With the exception of a passing disagreement, resulting from the discontent of Blandine, to whom her good friend had been able to give only orchestra seats in place of the desired box for the first performance of *Tannhäuser*, the relations of

¹See more especially G. Servières, *Tannhäuser à l'Opéra en 1861*, p. 108.

Wagner with all of Liszt's family preserved to the end their character of intimacy; and it was to Blandine that Wagner, upon quitting Paris definitely, gave, as a dear and precious relic, his work-table, in response to the desire that she had shown for it.¹

The letter given below, written by Ollivier to Nutter and preserved in the dossier of the Opéra, alludes in terms sufficiently lively to this little incident:

Mon cher ami,

Vous m'avez fait perdre une illusion: j'aurais joué ma tête sur votre exactitude. Il y (a) eu une répétition Dimanche² et vous ne m'en avez rien écrit; malgré notre accord. Il paraît que Wagner ne tenait pas à ce que j'y fusse, puisqu'il a répondu à mon commissionnaire que je lui ai envoyé, qu'il n'y en avait pas; et il y en a eu une puisque Ferry y a assisté.

En résumé, je ne vous trouve aimables ni l'un ni l'autre. Pour moi, cela m'est égal, et je me résigne parfaitement à ne pas entendre ni les répétitions ni la représentation de T. Mais je suis étonné qu'on ait si peu d'égards pour ma femme, qui se ferait un plaisir très grand de conduire quelqu'un avec elle.

Si à sa considération, Wagner ou vous, pouvez trouver le temps de l'avertir de la prochaine répétition, vous l'obligerez.

A vous

EMILE OLLIVIER.

Lundi (?) [27 février ?]

My dear friend,

You have made me lose an illusion: I would have staked my head upon your punctuality. There was a rehearsal Sunday² and you wrote me nothing of it, despite our agreement. It appears that Wagner was not anxious to have me present, since he replied to the messenger I sent him that there was none; but there was one, for Ferry assisted at it.

In fine, I do not find you amiable, neither the one nor the other of you. For me it is a matter of indifference, and I resign myself perfectly to hearing neither the rehearsals nor the performance of T. But I am surprised that so little regard is shown my wife, to whom it would be a great pleasure to take some one with her.

If, out of consideration for her, you or Wagner can find time to notify her of the next rehearsal, you will oblige

Yours

EMILE OLLIVIER.

Monday (?) [February 27th ?]

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The events which follow are known to all and it is not necessary to recall them. But among the papers included in the dossier of *Tannhäuser* in the Archives of the Opéra, there are

¹This table is now a part of the estate of Emile Ollivier, at Saint-Tropez.

²February 26th, probably.

still some items of interest to be gleaned. There is first, in Nutter's beautiful hand, the title as it was composed originally:

TANNHÄUSER	TANNHÄUSER
et	and
le Combat des (Maîtres) ¹ Chevaliers	the Combat of the (Master) ¹ Knight
Chanteurs sur le Wartbourg	Singers upon the Wartburg
Opéra romantique en 3 actes	Romantic opera in 3 acts
de	by
RICHARD WAGNER (etc.)	RICHARD WAGNER (etc.)

There is also a proof-sheet with the title of the libretto, printed in all probability toward the end of February or the beginning of March, 1861, when the date of the performance had not been fixed (this sheet bears indeed the words: "represented at Paris the 00 March, 1861"). By the side of Nutter's name figures that of E. Roche, who is known to have been from the outset one of the collaborators of the composer.

Finally—and this proves that the curiosity awakened by the performances of Wagner's work in Paris had not yet died out at the end of the year—there is a letter from the publisher Flaxland to Nutter, of which here is an interesting fragment:

Mon cher Monsieur

Vous avez eu l'obligeance de me promettre les paroles françaises de la scène et de la Romance de Wolfram² et de la prière d'Elisabeth. S'il y avait moyen de les avoir je vous serais vraiment reconnaissant. Il y a un excellent baryton qui voudrait chanter les deux morceaux de Wolfram et il vient tous les jours me rappeler la promesse que je lui ai faite de les lui donner en français.

Avez-vous pu vous entendre avec Mr. Wagner pour un second couplet de la Romance de l'Etoile du Soir...?

G. FLAXLAND.

20 x^{bre} (décembre 1861).

My dear Monsieur

You were so obliging as to promise me French words for the scene and Romance of Wolfram² and the prayer of Elisabeth. If there are any means by which I can have them I shall be truly grateful to you. There is an excellent baritone who wishes to sing the two pieces for Wolfram, and he comes every day to remind me of the promise I made to give him them in French.

Have you been able to arrange with Mr. Wagner for a second couplet to the Romance of the Evening Star...?

G. FLAXLAND.

20 x^{ber} (December, 1861)

During the last part of the year 1861 and the January following Wagner lived in Paris, almost unknown, seeing only a

¹The word Master has been canceled.

²"O, du mein holder Abenstern..."

few friends, among whom were Ollivier and Nuitter. The latter, whose fertile pen has written, in whole or in part, not less than *five hundred* dramatic works, granted Flaxland's desire immediately. It remains to be seen whether this was by arrangement with Wagner. The twelfth volume of the *Collected Works* does not acquaint us with a second couplet to the *Romance of the Star*, although it gives us a second strophe to the Grail recital in Lohengrin. It would be interesting to recover this little musical manuscript, if indeed it ever existed.

However that may be, here is the text, according to the French manuscript written in Nuitter's hand, of the two "couplets" of the celebrated *Romance*:

L'ÉTOILE DU SOIR

I.

O douce étoile, feu du soir,
 Toi que j'aimai toujours revoir,
 Dis-lui de grâce
 Adieu pour moi
 Quand elle passe
 Auprès de toi.
 Quand vers les sphères éternelles.
 Un ange saint étend ses ailes:

II.

Astre si pur, rayon d'espoir,
 Viens nous guider dans le devoir;
 Bannis le doute
 Et montre aux yeux
 La sainte route
 Qui mène aux cieux
 Quand vers les sphères éternelles
 Notre âme heureuse étend ses ailes.

This little poetical supplement, was it really utilized by the artist for whom the publisher Flaxland intended it? We cannot say: nor whether it was issued by this same publisher.

In any case, it is a slight proof that the failure of *Tannhäuser* had not been absolute, since there had been preserved, together with the celebrated march, this *Romance of the Star*, which formed the delight of the drawing-rooms, with the same right as the numerous platitudes in vogue in the last years of the Second Empire.

(Translated by Julia Gregory)